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Excerpts From Agent's Testimony

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 19 — Following are excerpts from testimony to the Iran-contra committees by Dewey R. Clarridge, a Central Intelligence Agency official, as made public today by the committees. The committees, in releasing the testimony, left deleted certain words blank. Officials have said an unidentified country under discussion in portions of the questioning by the committee was South Africa.

MR. CLARRIDGE. The way I read this cable traffic and the way I remember it, somebody in the agency — I think, at least the Director — took away from that January meeting with [deleted] that they were offering assistance to the democratic resistance. Some of the cable traffic coming in from [deleted] after that meeting, after [deleted] had gone back, continued that fair that we were talking about [deleted] support for the democratic resistance.

However, by the time you get to [deleted] it is very clear that they are not talking about that, and then after I went to [deleted] it became abundantly clear that they were not talking about assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance.

However, a decision had been taken before I went to [deleted] that we would neither ask for any assistance nor would we accept any assistance from [deleted] to the democratic resistance, and that was reinforced to a cable that was sent to me out there.

W. NEIL EGGLESTON, deputy chief counsel for the House committee. Cable No. [deleted] is a cable dated March 24, 1984. This is the cable that you claim makes it clear that [deleted] are not interested in assisting the contras?

A. It tells here what they are — it states here what they are prepared to do.

Q. And what it states is that they are prepared to provide training and equipment? And your explanation

A. Just a minute. It says they are prepared to provide training and equipment. He foresees these being undertaken on a direct basis between

[deleted] involved with C.I.A., offering behind-the-scenes advice, I guess, on where to plug in and what assistance would be truly useful.

Q. But it is your testimony that the C.I.A. did not know what [deleted] they were talking about?

A. I cannot speak for [deleted] whether he knew. All I know is that when I got to [deleted] and this issue came up and they raised it in the same context they were talking about one country or two countries, and we never could figure out what they were and they wouldn't tell us. We guessed that it was [deleted]. It could have been [deleted].

Q. But it is your testimony that assistance was only going to go to those countries, not to the contras?

A. That is what I was told.

Q. And when three days later Mr. Casey sends a memo to Mr. McFarlane indicating that the C.I.A. is exploring the possibility of obtaining assistance to the contras from [deleted], that is just erroneous?

A. It would seem so. Before I even made my trip, a decision was taken that we would not ask or, if offered, would not accept assistance from [deleted] for the Nicaraguan democratic resistance.

Q. Mr. Clarridge, I started this by asking you questions about your deposition testimony. One thing is plain from this discussion, that there were enormous discussions early on within the agency about third-country assistance.

A. That is not correct, to my knowledge, Mr. Eggleston. There were not enormous discussions. In fact, I can hardly recall any discussions that you could label as serious discussions except for this [deleted] business.

SENATOR WILLIAM S. COHEN, Republican of Maine. Mr. Clarridge, how many languages do you speak?

A. You ask at the current time?

Q. How many have you spoken in the past?

A. Really only two.

Q. I am just curious, because one thing is evident from your record, that you are a highly skilled individual who obviously enjoys a good repu-

tation with the intelligence community. It just struck me to the extent that you have some background in languages, it takes quite an exercise in memory, usually; and I was struck last evening in going through the depositions and I was, I must confess to you, I was going from points of laughter to points of despair as I read over the deposition itself.

On practically every single major event that we have been considering, you have virtually no memory at all, and that whenever a question is directed toward you, you indicate well, it may be, I just can't recall. It seems to be replete throughout the deposition. I was just wondering how to reconcile that frankly with your positions you have held over the years, and they've really been truly outstanding. I know you have an outstanding record and have enjoyed the regard of Director Casey.

I just find that perplexing as to how there could be such a major lapse in memory given the fact that you have obviously a very high intellectual capability.

So, I guess that will just have to remain unexplained. I will go forward and perhaps try to cover it in a different way.

Q. O.K. You also indicated this morning that Colonel North would make representations to John Poin-dexter and Bud McFarlane and use your name when, in fact, he never spoke with you, is that correct?

A. I'm saying that in that particular item that's what I think was going on.

Q. But you indicated he had a habit?

A. No. If I said he had a habit of doing it, I misspoke. I didn't say he had a habit. But there were on occasions —

Q. You said he liked to toss your name around because it carried some weight?

A. Yes. And I think he did.

Q. What does that mean?

A. That means he did toss my name around on occasions, saying this looked good or it looked bad.

Q. Even though he had never spoken with you?

A. Well, in that particular case he had never spoken to me.